



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

MH 34:24/8

MOH Circular No. 124/2022

30 November 2022

All Registered Medical Practitioners
All Specialist and General Medical Clinics
CEOs & CMBs of Public Hospitals
CEOs, GMs & MDs of Private Hospitals
CEOs, MDs and COOs of Community Hospitals
Medical Directors, Operations Manager and Managing Agents of CTFs, CIFs and TCFs
CEOs/Heads of NHs, IPHs, PRHs, PSH, Hospices
MSF Residential Care Facilities
All Funeral Services Providers, Embalmers and Private Crematoria Operators

FURTHER UPDATES TO MANAGEMENT OF DECEASED PERSONS WITH SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED COVID-19

As Singapore builds greater resilience against COVID-19 through vaccination and experience with past infection waves, healthcare protocols and Safe Management Measures have been progressively rationalised. This circular provides further updates to medical practitioners and funeral services providers on the management of deceased persons with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 (“COVID-19 deceased”) to align the handling of such persons with the current public health posture. These updates take effect on 5 December 2022, and supersede Circulars 179/2021, 180/2021 and 26/2022 (**Annexes A, B and C** respectively).

MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 DECEASED TO BE LARGELY ALIGNED WITH BASELINE¹ REQUIREMENTS

2. The updated requirements for the handling and management of COVID-19 deceased are aligned with baseline requirements,¹ with the following additional measures:

- a. Staff of funeral services providers handling COVID-19 deceased are to have undergone the Basic Infection Control Course (BICC) conducted by the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID);²

¹ “Baseline” refers to deaths which do not involve emerging or other specified infectious diseases. Specific guidance has been separately provided for emerging or other specified infectious diseases.

² A list of BICC trained funeral services providers can be referenced at [https://www.ncid.sg/For-General-Public/Pages/List-of-Funeral-Service-Companies-Trained-in-Basic-Infection-Control-Course-\(BICC\).aspx](https://www.ncid.sg/For-General-Public/Pages/List-of-Funeral-Service-Companies-Trained-in-Basic-Infection-Control-Course-(BICC).aspx).



- b. Healthcare workers and staff of funeral services providers are to use the following personal protective equipment (PPE) when handling COVID-19 deceased: surgical mask, long-sleeved water-resistant gown, gloves, and eye protection if splashes are anticipated (either face shield or goggles);
- c. Medical practitioners certifying the cause of death for COVID-19 deceased are to provide a copy of the memo at **Annex D** to the family of the deceased. The family of the deceased should be informed to provide the memo to the funeral services provider engaged, to facilitate the safe management of the deceased.

3. Maintaining the above measures strikes a balance between living with COVID-19 and continued vigilance against the possibility of future COVID-19 variants of concern. Healthcare institutions, other residential institutions and funeral services providers may continue to exercise discretion and undertake additional precautions beyond the above measures if needed.

LIFTING OF RESTRICTIONS ON MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 DECEASED

4. Apart from the measures set out in **para 2** above, the COVID-19 deceased management requirements set out in Circulars 179/2021 and 180/2021 **no longer apply**. For example:

- a. Spraying and washing of COVID-19 deceased will no longer be prohibited. Participating family members should be advised to wear face mask and gloves for personal protection;
- b. Embalming of COVID-19 deceased will no longer be prohibited, regardless of time from test positivity or stage of infection. If a COVID-19 deceased person is embalmed, a hermetically sealed coffin is not required. A tiered approach to the commencement of embalming COVID-19 deceased will be adopted (**para 5** provides more details); and
- c. Use of body bags and biohazard labels will no longer be mandatory.³

5. MOH and NEA have been working with the funeral industry to adopt a tiered approach for the provision of embalming services for COVID-19 deceased. The Association of Funeral Directors Singapore (AFD) has advised MOH and NEA that a 90-day transition period for phasing in embalming services would provide assurance for service continuity and staff safety. Licensed funeral parlours with embalming facilities that have opted in to make embalming available to COVID-19 deceased in this 90-day period are listed at <https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/after-death/post-death-matters/arranging-a-funeral> . The list will be updated as more licensed funeral parlours with embalming facilities come on board, including after the 90-day period has elapsed (i.e. after 5 March 2023).

³ Healthcare workers and funeral services providers may continue to exercise judgement and use body bags when warranted (e.g. if there is the possibility of fluid leakage).

UPDATED DEFINITION OF COVID-19 DECEASED

6. With the above updates, there is no longer a need to distinguish between infectious and non-infectious COVID-19 deceased as set out in Circulars 179/2021 and 180/2021. Moving forward, there will be a single category of “COVID-19 deceased” which will determine whether the requirements in **para 2** apply, based on the location of demise:

- a. **In an institutional setting**, persons who, at the time of demise, were or should have been isolated for the purposes of suspected or confirmed COVID-19, should be considered COVID-19 deceased;
- b. **At home / in the community**, persons who, at the time of demise met the prevailing COVID-19 criteria to be advised to isolate at home, should be considered COVID-19 deceased.

CIRCULAR 72/2022 REQUIREMENT TO NOTIFY MOH & HSA OF CERTAIN COVID-19 DEATHS TO REMAIN IN EFFECT

7. Notwithstanding Circular 179/2021 being superseded, the notification requirements in Circular 72/2022 (**Annex E**) remain in effect. Medical practitioners are reminded of the ongoing requirements (as set out in Circular 72/2022) to notify:

- a. MOH of all deceased persons who have COVID-19 stated as a cause of death on the certificate of cause of death;⁴ and
- b. HSA-FMD (Forensic Medicine Division) if a COVID-19 deceased⁵ is to be transferred for post-mortem under the Coroners Act or Infectious Diseases Act.

8. For clarification on this circular, please email MOH_INFO@moh.gov.sg.



A/PROF KENNETH MAK
DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

cc:
CEO, HSA

⁴This includes causes of death under “Antecedent Causes” and “Other Significant Conditions”. This also includes ICD codes containing “coronavirus”

⁵ The updated definition of “COVID-19 deceased” in para 6 applies